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SUBJECT: NEPAL: COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER MEETS MAOIST LEADERS
IN INDIA

Classified By: DCM Robert K. Boggs for reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) Summary. On November 20, Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) leader Madhav Kumar Nepal met with Maoist leaders in northern India. Nepal's public statements following the meeting provoked criticism -- but not denial -- from the Maoists, as well as condemnation by other political parties and the prime minister. Although Nepal and the Maoists agreed to meet for reasons of personal and partisan political advantage, it is less clear why the Indian Government would allow such a meeting to take place on its territory. End Comment.

2. (U) On November 20, Madhav Kumar Nepal, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Nepal - United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), reportedly met with Maoist leaders Baburam Bhattarai, Pushpa Kumar Dahal (alias Prachanda), and Krishna Bahadur Mahara in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India. In a press conference in Kathmandu following the meeting, Nepal reported that the Maoists would be more likely to return to the negotiating table if there were an all-party government and blamed the failure of the peace talks on the current administration of Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa. Nepal said he had pressed the Maoists to give up violence and join in the political parties' agitation against the King and Thapa government. However, he noted, the Maoists refused his suggestion and remain committed to their three-point demand of a roundtable conference, interim government and constituent assembly elections as well as to the formation of a republican state.

3. (U) Nepal's public statements sparked controversy and criticism from the Maoists, political parties and the Prime Minister. Maoist spokesman Mahara denounced Nepal for "misleading" the Nepali public in his statements. He claimed that, in the November 20 meeting, the Maoist leaders had demanded that the CPN-UML membership stop acting as "government spies," allegedly helping the GON to arrest and assassinate hundreds of Maoists. Mahara added that the talks emphasized the need for "forceful resistance" by the people against the country's militarization and against the King and government. According to spokesman Mahara, the Maoists are seeking to meet with all the political parties, including the Nepali Congress.

4. (U) Nepali Congress (NC) Party leader, G.P. Koirala, criticized Nepal for not informing the other agitating political parties prior to his meeting with the Maoists. Koirala also claimed that his party would not meet with the Maoist leadership unless they renounce violence. Likewise, Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa, in a mildly-worded statement, argued that Nepal should not have met with a group that the government has declared to be terrorists.

5. (C) Comment. The motivations of both Madhav Nepal and the Maoists to meet, while different, seem easy to identify. Madhav Nepal most likely sought to raise his political profile as a viable candidate for Prime Minister and to appear as an effective interlocutor with the notoriously intransigent insurgents, as well as to gain some valuable public relations mileage for his sidelined party. The Maoists, on the other hand, were likely motivated by a desire to widen the schism between the political parties and Prime Minister Thapa's government as well as by the hope that a meeting with the head of the largest democratic party might help legitimate their own tattered political credentials. It is less clear what the Government of India's motivations could have been to allow this none too surreptitious meeting to take place (Nepal advertised his intentions in the local press the morning of the meeting). If a prominent politician from Nepal can board a bus to Lucknow and meet with the Maoists' elusive leaders unimpeded by the GOI's extensive security apparatus, then oft-repeated GOI claims that it cannot locate the Maoist leaders sheltering in India ring hollower than ever. End Comment.

MALINOWSKI